42, Old Dumbarton Rd.,
Glasgow, C.3.
4/12/67

Dear Bob,

I knew there was something I had forgotten to mention to you on Saturday.

It is this. Should you require any duplicating to be done over the organising of the Open Forum I think I may be able to do it for you - that is to say I think I may be able to get access to a Roneo - an old machine but still, I think, serviceable. I cannot promise this for sure but at least I can try. For only the cost of the stencil and paper. That would not be much.

I enclose a song sheet written by me at the time of the Fairfield crisis some two years ago which you may find of interest. There is a long story attached thereto which I may tell you sometime.

Fraternally,

Tom

Tom Fleming

P.S. I could also help you with any special secretarial work at the Forum if you want. Eg. typing etc.

42, Old Dumbarton Rd.,
Glasgow, C.3.
3/7/68

Dear Robert,

I think your ~~xx~~ Scottish anarchists are so serious as to make fools of themselves. One should never take oneself seriously! (This is a fault I always make!) - however the point of this letter is part-apologetic, part-constructive.

First the apology.

Aye at the coo's tail - that's me. Ergo my belated appearance on Saturday AND Sunday. And I wanted to get a word in but could'nt.

Here is what I wanted to say.

Do you know there is a resurgence of anarchist-type thought at Glasgow University? How deep or sincere this is I cannot at present say - I have been feeling the pulse of it very very gradually, but I do know that the Left wingers up there have adopted* Red Danny as candidate for the forthcoming Rectorial election - and this should be encouraged. I am doing what little I can to do this.

* at my instigation!

Secondly I am due to deliver a talk and lead a discussion to some nurses on Art and Socialism - which comes pretty close to the anarchist position. And also due to repeat it (at a deeper level) on Iona next month. In other words I shall do what I can to hit - and hit hard!

Bob - you remind me of my ex-comrade, Stan; who opened a pub in Dalmarnock Rd., - flogging beer and spirits to the workers whose side he was supposed to take! That is neither socialism nor anarchism - but merely respectable get-rich-quick careerism! And as bourgeois as any!

Best wishes, till we meet again

(C.I.D. and all!)

Ian Fleming

JOHN T. CALDWELL
181 MONTROSE ST.
CLYDEBANK G81 2PF
Telephone 041-952-9211

JOHN T. CALDWELL
181 MONTROSE ST.
CLYDEBANK G81 2PF
Sunday, 22 July '84

Dear Ben,

Just a note. I hope all is well with you, and better than can be expected in this wicked world.

I sent some of the photographs you sent me to Ian Macdougall of Edinburgh who is compiling a photagraphic record of the Scottish Left. I think its publication date has just been announced. Guy and Associates will have a place in it. Some of the negatives you gave me I have loaned to Bob Jones of Bradford. He is writing a biography of Willie Macdougall. He was in Glasgow a couple of weeks ago taking tape recordings of interviews with me and others. His interest in Willie has expanded his intention, into writing a history of the anarchist-antiparliamentarian- USM- Workers' Open Forum highway of thought and activity from 1914 to 1964. He has written to say that he had hoped to include you in his interviews, but spent so much time with the Aldred Archives in the Mitchel Library that he was not able to do all he haD ~~INTENDED~~ intended. He has asked me for your address, and will be writing to you. His name is Bob Jones, and his address is 6 Lillian Street, BRADFORD BD4 9LP.

He tells me that you were Chairman of the Workers' Open Forum in the "late fifties and early sixties." I did not know that. I thought you were with the USM during that period. I remember the great work you did on the Justice for Blackhurst Committee, and how, when Guy died you tried to revive the USM. It was a lost cause, for its time was past; but you may have had better success if I had been a more capable and more forceful person. You hadn't much to go on. I often think of those days and am sure you could have given life to the Group if you had arrived on the scene a few years earlier when Ethel was active and the Press was not under threat of closure. There's no use lamenting now. Probably we would still have been fighting a lost Cause.

I suppose I told you that I am writing a third volume of the Aldred Trilogy. This is "-Come Dungeons Dark" It tells of the resistance to the First War by Guy and

others. It is s story that deserves to be placed on record. It is a pity I am beginning to feel my age. I am full of wee rests that grow longer daily. Still, I hope to get there.

Walter Ross has had The Red Evangel printed in page proof for a year, but there are always reasons for not getting on with printing it. The current holdup it that the typescript is with Peter Miller in North Berwick. You may remember Peter. He was an art student, later a teacher in (I think) Bellahouston Academy, then he went to North Berwick where he teaches . He was a regular attender at Guy's meetings, a visitor at Baliol Street during Guy's illness, a very staunch friend and follower. He is studying the ms of the Evangel to gather inspiration for a suitable cover design. Now that the swhools are in recess he should be able to give the task some attention, then, perhaps Walter will proceed with the printing. I will, of course, send you a copy when the work (if) comes out.

Are you still plumbing away? Or have you extinguished your blow-lamp for the last time? You mention deafness in your last letter. I hope some alleviation of that condition has been found.

You will probably hear from Bob Jones on a few days. I hope you will respond to his quest for information, and that doing so will give you much pleasure - though, inevitably, a little sadness. That's life.

Best wishhes

Yours

Eddy.

24th. July 84

Caldy,

Thanks for your letter - a ray of sunshine in an otherwise dismal postbag. . You know, Guy said to me years ago that -'things have a way of working themselves out'. It seemed a bit mystical in my youth, but as I get older I'm beginning to understand the wisdom of those words. If it hadn't been for that enquiry by Farquar Maclay - the photos might have lay in my file for long enough However it's good to see them put to good use.

Your remarks re Bob Jones and the W.O.F. / U.S.M. period brought the memories flooding back. But, you know, memory is a kind of collective thing, I find that I can remeber much more when I'm blethering to some of the old 'gang' when I meet them from time to time.

I wasn't the chairman of the 'Open Forum, I was the secretary. Willie aproached on May Day 1959 in the Queens Park. He told me that the Open Forum still had some funds left in the bank and that he would like a couple of us 'young ones' to get it going again. At that time they had lost the hall in Renfrew Street for some reason or other. However, I managed to get the Corporation to give us Sawmilfied Street on a Sunday night. So Willie and I got the bank mandate changed to him and I so that we could draw the money out to pay the rent of the hall. The way it was set up it required two signatures for this purpose. As you know, The 'Forum lingered on in Sawmillfield Street for a couple of years. It eventually moved to the Bakers' Union Hall in the Gallowgate for a few months after that.

In anticipation of Bob Jones' letter, I was rumaging thro' some of my old letters and things and I came across a couple of letters that Guy had sent me, I enclose copies of them in case they are of any interest to your researches. I'm glad that you and others are writing all this stuff down. It needs to be recorded I only wish that I could help in some way. I could offer Walter some cash to help defray the printing costs - waht do you think ?

I'm still in the Plumbing Industry - though I don't do much physical waork these days, I employ a couple of plumbers to do that for me. I will write again when Bob contacts me.

041-952-9211

JOHN T. CALDWELL
181 MONTROSE ST.
CLYDEBANK G81 2PF

24th July 1984.

Dear Ben,

Thanks for your prompt reply to my letter. I am very pleased that you will assist Bob Jones in his researches, and I know that he will be very grateful for your help.

And thanks for the letters from Guy which you enclosed. The second one recalls the sad occasion of its writing. Guy never did reconcile himself to the death of Ethel.

I did not know that you were responsible for the renting of the hall in Sawmillfield St. It gave the WOF a new lease of life. The Renfrew Street Hall was inder a "Purchase or quit" order. A thousand pounds were required to buy it. Willie tried in vain to raise that sum. What was in the bank was probably the proceeds of his appeals. Aftmr Renfrew Street the WOF was in a hall in Cathedral Street for a while - a sort of shed.

I was only in Sawmillfield Street a couple of times, I don't recall any of the speakers at that time. I was surprised to learn that Robert McKean and Albert Grant were officials of the WOF.

I think Bob Jones , who was in latter years a good friend of Willie Macdougall, is keen researcher and a competent social historian. He is younger than either of us, so information imparted to him will give memories of our active life an extension into a new generation, and beyond; to their infinite benefit in edification and inspiration .

Let me know how you get on with Bob Jones.

Cheers,

Baldy

6 LILIAN ST.,
BRADFORD
BD4 9LP
31/7/84

Dear Ben Mullin,

A few days back I had a letter from John Caldwell - Colby - telling me you were anxious to help in compiling a history of the WSM/WOF movement. I'm obviously very pleased about this and it's a pity I couldn't have seen you when in Glasgow recently. Maybe I can come and see you another time?

In the meantime I hope it's alright if I bombard you with a few questions. I should point out that my immediate interest is to compile a short biography of Willie McBryall which I intend to submit to a publication called the Dictionary of Labour Biography. This, hopefully, will go a little way towards ensuring that Willie is both remembered and recognized for his unwavering work for the movement.

In case you have not seen it I have enclosed an obituary of Willie I wrote shortly after his death. I now realise it contains some inaccuracies. Anything you could add to the details given in the obituary would be most appreciated.

I know very little about the latter days of the Workers Open Forum (or the earlier days for that matter) and

I suspect you could add much to my knowledge of this.

Could you tell me how you initially got involved with the WSF and what the meetings were like at the old Regent St. Hall? Do you remember any particular speakers? Perhaps you remember Harry McShane speaking on "Stalin the socialist"! but I think this will be before your time?

I know very little about the Sauchiehall St hall – was that a much smaller hall and did the meetings change in anyway as a consequence of the move. Have you any idea how many people would attend the meetings at Sauchiehall St as against Regent St.

Do you know how long meetings continued at Sauchiehall St. and why meetings stopped there? I believe the WSF then held open-air meetings at Renfield St. until the end of 1959 and then it seems to disappear from view. Perhaps you can correct me on that.

The next piece of information I have is an attempt by an "organizing Committee" including yourself as secretary to get the WSF going again in 1963 with meetings held at the religious rooms at 200 Buchanan St. Could you tell me what happened to this initiative and whether, as I have assumed, the WSF ceased operation from 1959 or 1960–'3?

That's probably enough questions from a new correspondent! One further related question however. Do you know anything about the libel action Willie faced in the late 1950s from Hamilton Conery and whether this affected the WSF in any way?

I will leave it there for now. Perhaps I can ask you some questions about the USM and other aspects of the movement another time? Thanks for tolerating so many questions from someone you don't know and I will look forward to hearing from you.

Yours fraternally,

Bob Jones

(R. W. JONES)

3rd April 87

Dear Caldy,

Just a brief note. I met John Farquar Maclay the other day - he had just returned from a tour of Spain and Portugal with James Donaldson Daniels, I think you remember Jimmy ?, he now hails from Aberdeen. However, Farquar was saying that you have found a publisher for your books on Guy. This is great news. I trust that you'll let me know some more.

Farquar was also saying that he got a copy of Guy's tape from you. I wonder if you managed to get the quality of the original tapes improved ? The ones that I've got on the old real to reel tapes - that I got from Albert - are a bit rough. If you've got them 'cleaned up' let me know so that I can run off a few copies. Sometimes the young Anarchists ask me for copies and the ones I've got are not too good.

Hope to hear from you

19 Caldercuilt Rd., G20 OAE (tel. 946 2908)

sept 1st

Dear Ian

Obviously your response to the proposed meeting was to say the least disappointing. Tommy Nelson is a shrewd man but he doesnt yet realise that there is no animosity between you and me. There is animosity, bitterness, personal dislike, perhaps hatred, but it comes from yourself. I dont feel any animosity towards you at all, of which you are well aware. Maybe there is a reason for your animosity, maybe there isn't, who knows. The time we met in McCools I asked you about it and you told me, as far as I recall, that it was because I had slagged you off unfairly. Apart from that I dont know. But it has got to the stage where you're now entering a different game. That's up to you. You're well aware of what my position is politically, of what my motivation is - it used to be your own; and was the central part of why workers' city was as strong as it was. And why also that our own involvement with CAA was out of reach of people who would love to have done us in. They couldnt hurt us because they couldnt get past the integrity of our commitment. That was the key to what success we had as a group during the workers' city period. Yes there was astute organisation and campaigning with very limited resources, great experience, energy and boldness, etc; all of that. But the real secret was the integrity we had. And all they had left at Tammanay Hall was disinformation, propaganda, and straightforward lies; allied to a power-base. You're in danger of getting enmeshed in that trap Ian, dont let it happen.

To clear up potential misunderstandings:

1) there is no possibility of me ever returning to work at the office.
2) there is nothing in the work I did during my time with CAA that can hurt yourself.
3) there is nothing in the work that I did that can hurt the office.

Tommy Nelson is a guy I've got the utmost respect for and he is right to say that the office cannot discuss the matter with me unless you all agree. That is precisely why I asked for the meeting with you included in the first place. I'm not about to do anything behind anybody's back; either we have a meeting at which you attend, or we don't have a meeting. I would be glad to stop this stuff immediately, to meet with you, the two of us, in a fucking cafe, no alcohol, and talk it out. It's up to you.

Tim

I didnt go to work at Clydeside Action on Asbestos with a view to "writing a book". The idea to me is repugnant. Eighteen months have passed since I finished work at the office. My involvment was such that I could not have continued on an irregular basis, not even on a part-time basis. I always found the work needed full time commitment; there's no other way I can work at something. Anyway, apart from anything else, I had no alternative but to quit. I dont get any income support, no sick money. The time I spent at the office was paid my myself. My publishers had given me an advance sum to write a novel. Instead of writing the novel I worked for CAA. And then that money ran out and I was borrowing from a couple of close friends. That was the reality. So I stopped and wrote to a conclusion the novel How late it was, how late which I had started roundabout 1990.

Since then it has been almost impossible to discuss the issue of asbestos-related disease: and certainly impossible to do so with those whose knowledge on the subject is minimal. And most people know virtually nothing.

Recently I printed out a few of my "home" files (the work I did in the house) for an acquaintance (Angela McRobbie). Her father had been diagnosed mesothelioma; shortly afterwards he died. She knew I had had some sort of knowledge in the field and wanted to discuss things; her family had contacted Robin Thomson and were considering legal action. Angela McRobbie is the best kind of academic; unable to rest unless she gets to the bottom of things. Already she had made contact with C.A.A. and was beginning to scent that the asbestos issue was much more complicated than she had thought.

I found it hard to speak to her; she knew so little and I knew quite a lot. So I printed these files out for her, a cross-section of the work I had done. This would give her some solid background, let her gain some understanding both of the illness that killed her father, and of the nature of the struggle for justice that every victim has to suffer.

From there it was a straightforward jump to me wanting to put together a fuller cross section, including a selection from my "office" files. I keep "insurance copies" of the discs I used at the office. Things had the mysterious habit of disappearing, especially when wee Joe was around.

Anyway, so this is what my intention is, to make available a full cross-section of the work I did, and in this way giving as a broad picture of the struggle for justice as I found it in the time I was involved. I want to try and do it so that anybody reading it will be brought along side by side with my own learning process - or to as much an extent as possible. When I started out in early 1991 (like Ian) I knew almost

nothing. But at the same time it was necessary to go to work. So mistakes would be made and that had to be risked, and gradually as I got more knowledgeable fewer mistakes would be made and different ways of moving ahead became clearer, etc. etc., a learning process. Much of the learning I did obviously came from the work of other people and a variety of sources. This was the way the office operated, or more to the point, the way the office should have operated, that someone's knowledge, experience and information wasnt personal property but belonged to every single CAA member. Which is another reason for putting this documentary account together.

29 August 1994

081 579 5000
231 2619

99 Millbrae Rd.,
Glasgow.
6:9:94

to J.Kelman

In regard to your 'documentary account' and letter on my resistance to give any help to you.
On the first point you raise on the penury that you incurred because of your commitment to CAA. That surely was your affair and choice as it was for everybody involved or is this a move prior to the submission of an invoice for work done? As we understood it at the time all work was voluntary and freely given. Incidentally, did you notice that the word 'I' occurs 12 times in your first paragraph?
On the second point on the impossibility of discussing the issue with the ill-informed, surely that says more about your inability to communicate than it does for the ignorant to understand?
Angela McRobbie I know. We handled her case and referred her to Robin Thompson & Partners. I know she is an academic and have read some of her essays and I don't have a clue what a 'best' kind of academic means. But the following paragraph in your 'documentary account' reeks of the worst kind of condescension; " ..she knew so little and I knew quite a lot.." It's like the blurbs you read on the cover of a Mills & Boon romance.
Anyway we get to the main point. You want to do a "fuller cross section". For whom? And for what? Do you feel qualified for such a project? Personally I doubt it. I discussed your project with a colleague, Joanne Leneghan and she couldn't stop laughing. You may remember when she made known her criticisms on your handling of DSS cases one time in the Scotia and you became very angry and the usual insults took place. Which is most unfortunate because she could have shown where you could have improved your understanding of the system. As to your knowledge of the larger picture of the asbestos issue you know little, of this I am convinced. You must therefore advance further in your 'learning process' and the availability of a library ticket will surely help you here.
You are correct that the information and knowledge in CAA is no one person's property. It belongs to CAA. And no-one merely by taking out a membership whether they are the 'best' academic or a political poser/Scottish existentialist hero has the right to one scrap of paper from our files. As Assistant Secretary and main Information Officer of CAA I have been given the responsibility of these files and will act accordingly for the benefit of our membership and in this matter we will not help you.
On your suggestion for a meeting, forget it. As asst sec you will have to deal with me on this matter, sorry to disappoint you.

On animosity between us? Not at all, I just find you a personality with serious sociopathic defects and any connection between you and our group as it stands now, would in my opinion be to its detriment.
Don't talk to me of what was involved in Workers City. I was there all the time along with Hugh, Elaine & Pat, you were sometimes, but when it mattered, when Elaine and Pat were being attacked by your republican-publican friend, you bottled and kept your mouth shut. Some tribune.
On your forcing me out of CAA I will not comment, suffice to say that it deprived CAA of my services for at least 3 months. That I don't forget, or forgive. And please remember I was asked back, and it is not being immodest to say that without me this office would have vanished into a black hole.
As to my integrity, refer to my work, my friends, my colleagues and the people I represent. I don't have to run to you for an integrity quotient.
So the base line is this. Stick to writing your dreary novels and short stories and keep away from us. Despite the great loss of a major, international, existential, philosophical scribe on a par with Homer, Virgil and Flim, our small ignorant group has managed to push ourself through a long complicated 'learning process' and has moved into sunlight. We now have the largest organised data base on the subject outside of Mount Sinai Hospital and we are using it to good effect. We don't need your support or your condescending, patronising advice.
Finally, on behalf of CAA I formally ask you to return all hard and soft copies on work done on cases that is in your possession. This material is the property of CAA and should you fail to comply with this request we will take this issue to law. If you have passed any such material to any friends (i.e. A. McRobbie) tell her this applies equally to them. Also please impart to your publishers that the views in your forthcoming publication are not those of CAA, but of the author/s and should it contain any information that is wrong or misleading or defamatory, and/or prejudices any asbestos case, or our campaign, we will take issue with you in public and publicly disown it.
In conclusion please refer to the last lines of "Rent Arrears" by John McGarrigle.

Ian McKechnie

c.c.
of all correspondence on this matter to my colleagues in CAA, my friends and Private Eye.